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ABSTRACT

The publication contains an article on curriculum selection in adult basic education (ABE), three presentations on the humanities and ABE, and a concluding commentary. An introductory article, "Criteria for Selecting Curriculum in Adult Basic Education" by Donald Mocker, emphasizes the need for broader criteria for selection of ABE curriculum. Three papers, authored by educators of diverse backgrounds, address the question of what is basic in the humanities and why this must be included as part of the ABE curriculum. The papers, presented as part of a 1975 "town meeting," are: "Why Not Teach the Humanities to ABE Students?" by H. Bruce Franklin, "The Humanities in ABE: A Means of Achieving Productive Individuality" by Carmen Rodriguez, and "The Humanities: A Brief View of Potential Power" by Walter Bradford. The commentary on the three addresses is by William Jones. The authors stress that there are individual rights to full development of human potential and that human potential can best be understood through the humanities. The articles call for ABE learners to demand that they be given an education which nurtures cultural and ethnic pride. Objections are raised toward institutional goals of ABE and the narrow conceptualization of ABE and the adult basic learner. (EA)

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Why Teach the Humanities to Adult Basic Education Students?

Center for Resource Development in Adult Education

University of Missouri-Kansas City

School of Education

Editors:

Donald W. Mocker

William C. Jones

June, 1975

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Foreword

The idea of teaching the humanities to adult basic education (ABE) students is likely, at first thought, to evoke feelings of considerable indifference in most of us — indifference born of what we think the humanities are about, and what we think ABE students are about.

If we think about the humanities at all, we are likely to remember them as the least pleasant and useful of the courses required of our own educational experience.

If we think about ABE students at all, we are likely to see them as people who need most to become productive economically and who should get on with the business of developing salable skills and competencies.

Simply because this is what we are likely to think, the authors in this publication have sought to instruct us differently. Among them they offer a new and broader definition of the humanities — not polite and esoteric and remote, but vibrant and earthy and even dangerous. They present the humanities as expressions of life and beauty and death and sorrow and joy and anger and understanding and dissent. In short, those expressions of all that is creative and emotional within the scope of human experience.

Perhaps more importantly though, the authors also remind us that **ABE students** is simply a name we have assigned to a group of people whose formal education is less than that currently prescribed as necessary by our society. That deficiency does not affect, however, their right as full heirs of the society. They are as capable as we of appreciating and benefiting from the common heritage, and do, in fact, contribute to both the substance and the support of the humanities as all of us share in them.

Most of us consciously encounter the humanities as an integral part of our formal educational experience. It is the humanities indeed that elevate education above the level of mere training. In failing to consider the humanities as necessary to under-educated adults, we have in essence denied them education, substituting training in its stead.

The authors here have addressed themselves to teachers of ABE students. Their message is for all teachers. For all of us.

George E. Spear
Director
Center for Resource Development
in Adult Education

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CHAPTER I

CRITERIA FOR SELECTING CURRICULUM IN ADULT BASIC EDUCATION

Donald W. Mocker

Problem

The obvious failure after ten years of effort to eliminate or significantly reduce illiteracy in the United States is finally bringing a realization that more is needed than basic instruction in reading, writing and arithmetic. If the economic and social conditions of the undereducated adult are to be improved, then educators who have more than a "3-R mentality" will need to assume decision-making roles. The curriculum which has traditionally been taught in Adult Basic Education (ABE) has been a replication of public elementary and secondary curriculum or a replication of the curriculum that was established to teach the foreign-born in citizenship programs.

With the emphasis on basic skills, it would seem that the objective of adult education for the under-educated, ". . . is not to secure the 'right to life, liberty and pursuit of happiness,' but to relieve the tax-paying public of the financial responsibility for those who cannot manage to survive" (Sherk, 1972). Education under this system stops when the learner is capable of survival. The goal of education thus becomes survival, and consequently, no curriculum is provided which will enable the learner to achieve a fullness of life. In fact, this type of educational activity could more accurately be described as training rather than education (Johnson, 1969). Something more is needed.

According to the National Advisory Committee on Adult Basic Education (1969), program focus should be on civic participation, jobs, home and family life. It is interesting to note that these priorities are very similar to the general objectives for education identified by the Educational Policies Committee in 1938 and the goals for secondary education identified by the Progressive Education Association in 1939. To those educators who think adult education should be different than the education of children, the time has come to rethink program priorities.

If ABE is to offer a program which is aimed at helping adults achieve above the "survival level", then one of the critical questions becomes, "What will we teach?"; and, if a rational curriculum development process is followed, then the criteria used to select curriculum becomes a basic issue. Before proposing different criteria, let's look at an educational model and see where criteria for curriculum fit into the total educational enterprise.

Educational Enterprise Model

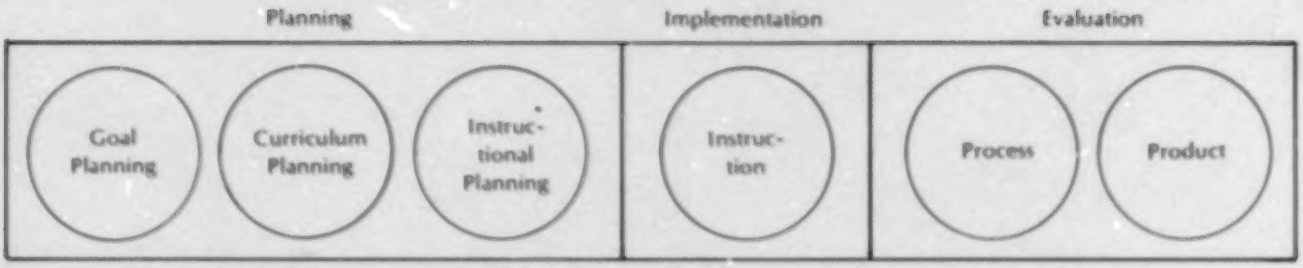
The fundamental problem with identifying the criteria used for curriculum selection is that few educators agree on what is curriculum. Carroll (1967) defines curriculum as "the interaction of student and teacher in an educational situation containing content, process and values," Aker (1972) defines curriculum as ". . . all of the educational pursuits of a single agency," and Thomas 1964 suggests that curriculum is, ". . . blocks of subject matter."

Rather than confuse the issue further by offering still another definition of curriculum and how curriculum relates to the total educational enterprise, the writer will use an already established definition of curriculum and a model for understanding the educational process.

Johnson (1974) identified the three major processes in a rational educational enterprise as planning, implementation and evaluation.

Figure 1

EDUCATIONAL ENTERPRISE MODEL



The first process is planning and includes three sub-processes; planning for goals, planning for curriculum and planning for instruction. Johnson (1967) has defined curriculum as "a structured series of intended learning outcomes" and considers instructional plans as an agenda whose purpose is to facilitate the teaching of the curriculum. The second process is implementation, or instruction, and it is during this stage that the instructional plan developed during the planning process is executed. This is the action stage when teaching and learning happen. The third and final process is evaluation. At this stage, all processes and products can be evaluated including the process and product of the evaluation. Evaluating the evaluation is what Scriven (1972) refers to as meta-evaluation.

Using Johnson's Model, the criteria for curriculum selection would be related to the curriculum development process in the planning phase to act as a screen when selecting potential learning outcomes. Needs of the learner, although important in instructional planning, become a criterion for selecting what is intended to be learned. If reading, writing and arithmetic are the only criteria, then the intended outcomes will be limited to these areas. Broader criteria are needed if the intended outcome is "fullness of life."

Criteria for Selecting Curriculum

The criteria which are being established were originally identified by Manzo (1971) as "fundamental needs of the functionally illiterate adult." (An expansion of Manzo's original paper has been subsequently published in the 22nd Yearbook of the National Reading Conference). This writer suggests that, by renaming this list "criteria for selecting curriculum for the undereducated adult," consistency with a rational curriculum development process can be followed and "learner needs" will thus be associated with the correct process in the planning phase.

Manzo outlined the following needs, which now will be referred to as criteria for curriculum selection, as:

I. Language: capability to orally express self clearly and effectively in both the community dialect and the language of the core culture (standard English dialect).

II. Reading and Writing: capability to read and write (at least initially) on a fourth-fifth reading level; subsequently, opportunity to use such skills to insure continued development to a more formidable level. [This is the curriculum which the writer referred to at the beginning of the paper as traditional in

nature and which has comprised the majority of the curriculum in Local ABE programs.]

III. Culture — Academic factors: exposure to and 'training' in the essential features of the core culture's academic and social heritage.

IV. Emotional Solvency: freedom from such maladaptive behaviors as tend to minimize cognitive growth, vocational adjustment and emotional well-being.

If broader criteria are needed to provide a curriculum which is liberating in nature, i.e., one that will free a person from a dependent position then the above may give needed direction. An expansion of these criteria will help contrast what is now being taught in ABE to what should be taught.

I. Language Criterion

This criterion is concerned with potential curriculum items that will help develop or improve oral speech patterns appropriate for use in the larger community, the learner's vocabulary, and the learner's cognitive skills in all areas of the language arts and the learner's ability to communicate with accuracy personal experiences and feelings. This ability is necessary if any person wants to communicate with individuals outside their immediate environment.

II. Reading and Writing Criterion

The focus of this criterion is to identify that content which will help raise the functioning ability of adults above the fourth reading level, which has traditionally been identified as the minimum educational level. Curricular items necessary to achieve the basic skills have already been identified by both public school and adult educators and do not present a great problem in curriculum planning. Curriculum planners in ABE have generally over-emphasized this area. This criterion must give equal attention to curricula which will increase a person's comprehension and improve the mental processing of information. The process of thinking is primarily developed through language and interaction with learned individuals (Manzo, 1971); curriculum which will expose the adult to a broader language system and permit social-intellectual interactions is essential to improving the adult's reservoir of knowledge and critical thinking skills. In addition this criterion should provide curriculum which will enable an adult to obtain a high school equivalency certificate (GED), and curriculum on methods or "learning-how-to-learn."

III. Culture — Academic Criterion

This criterion should provide curricular items in ethnic and cultural studies of both the individual's and the core society's cultural and ethnic background. As part of this, curriculum should be included for the study of music, art, drama and other areas from the humanities. Freire (1970) suggests a paradigm which may be especially powerful in this area. Understanding the difference between culture and nature and the relationship of the humanities to culture and how all people contribute to the humanities may be of particular importance. The "intended outcome" of this curricular area is adults who understand they can contribute to and, in fact, change part of their environment.

IV. Affective Criterion

This criterion is concerned with curricular items which will change those inappropriate behaviors and replace them with, or counter-condition them with new, more appropriate responses.

According to Manzo (1971)

> The illiterate adult is one who by definition has failed to succeed — that is, he has failed to fully acquire that which the society considers rudimentary; he cannot read, he is hardly able to hold a job, and he is a financial burden to his fellow citizens. Much of this apparent failure is related not to intellectual deficiencies, nor to physical handicap, but is more often due to culture isolation, prejudice, and/or a poor family situation.
>
> The individual raised in such circumstances is often beset with inappropriate emotional responses which have been recently labeled as **maladaptive behaviors.** As long as these maladaptive — or negative visceral learnings continue, there is little hope for him to bring about substantial changes in his learning capabilities.

This area of curriculum planning has been overlooked by educators because of the lack of technology to implement such a thrust and the general political nature of changing or engineering people's behaviors.

Conclusion

The fundamental question confronting curriculum planners in ABE is what is "basic" in the education of millions of adults in our country who are educationally lacking, politically voiceless, and racially and culturally in the minority.

If the curriculum is to be rationally derived and adults are to achieve a fullness in life, then the criteria for selection of curriculum must be broader than presently conceived. To do less would be to deny the legislative intent of the program and to deny a basic right to all citizens.

The following papers are addressing the question of what is basic in the humanities and why must this be included as part of the curriculum in adult basic education.

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CHAPTER II

"WHY NOT TEACH THE HUMANITIES TO ABE STUDENTS?"

H. Bruce Franklin

Outrageous! That's the word for it. Here we are, in the last quarter of the twentieth century, in the United States of America, and people are having to write position papers and hold a town meeting to argue that tens of millions of adults who have been deprived of their rightful education should have the opportunity to study their own human culture.

To see what kind of outrage this is, turn the question around. That is, let's think of the arguments why the humanities should **not** be taught to adult basic education students. Better yet, instead of making up arguments out of our own imagination, let's look at American history to see the arguments that actually have been used against democracy in education. This way we should arrive at an understanding of why it is still necessary for us to argue for it and how we should go about doing it. (We will also be learning something about the humanities in the process.)

The most notorious arguments against education for the people were those made against allowing Black people to have any education at all, arguments that for a long time were successful. For example, until 1865 it was a crime in this state of Missouri to teach any "Negro" — whether slave or free — to read and write. And as late as 1938, the very university which is now progressive enough to sponsor this project, the University of Missouri, went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court to attempt to preserve segregation in higher education and to prevent any Black person from receiving education in law within this state at public expense.[1]

But it was not always illegal to teach Blacks to read and write. The Missouri law did not come until 1847, and most of the slave states did not make the education of "Negroes" a crime until the early 1830's. In fact, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, there was fairly widespread encouragement in these states for educating the slaves. But two main events changed all this. The first was the industrialization of agriculture in the slave states. Slavery passed from a patriarchal institution, where slaves served on family plantations, to a vast economic enterprise, where slaves were bred as animals and then exported to work by the hundreds and thousands in the cotton fields, the first American agribusiness. The second main event followed from the first: a wave of violent rebellions and insurrections swept the slave states. In swift reaction, the various state governments passed laws making it a crime for "Negroes" to educate themselves and making it almost as criminal for any white person to give them any educational opportunity.

The Virginia law of 1831 is typical. It decrees "That all meetings of free negroes or mulattoes, at any school-house, church, meeting-house or other place for teaching them reading or writing, either in the day or night, under whatsoever pretext, shall be deemed and considered as an unlawful assembly."[2] "Negroes" breaking this law were punishable by whipping, whites by fine and imprisonment.

These events throw a most helpful light on our topic, as we shall see. The most instructive illumination comes from the **justification** that was offered for these laws. (All historical actions, no matter how monstrous they may be perceived by others, are always seen by their apologists as moral and rational.) There were three basic arguments:

1. "Negroes" lack intelligence. It is therefore inappropriate, and even impossible, to turn them into intellectual beings. They should be allowed to remain what they are by nature, creatures of passion and animal pleasures.

2. Reading and writing would unfit them to be slaves or even laborers. Their aspirations would be too high, and they would not be content then with their designated lot in our society.

3. Such discontent, particularly fanned by the pamphlets and books of "agitators" and "fanatics," could lead to massive insurrection.

Notice how these three arguments merge and blend in the following passage from *The South Vindicated from the Treason and Fanaticism of the Northern Abolitionists* (published in Philadelphia, 1836):

> We are aware that certain pseudo philanthropists affect great concern for the benighted state of the negro, and condemn the enactments which, in some of the states, discourage his education. We may be permitted to remark, that, but for the intrusive and intriguing interference of pragmatical fanatics, such precautionary enactments would never have been necessary. When such foes are abroad, industrious in scattering the seeds of insurrection, it becomes necessary to close every avenue by which they may operate upon the slaves. . . . Education, thus perverted, would become equally dangerous to the master and the slave. . . .
>
> The situation of the slave is, in every particular, incompatible with the cultivation of his mind. It would not only unfit him for his station in life, and prepare him for insurrection, but would be found wholly impracticable in the performance of the duties of a labourer. . . .
>
> The absence of science is no misfortune to the slave. He is averse to study; and, with every advantage, seldom makes sufficient progress to render education a source of pleasure or profit to him. Inert and unintellectual, he exhibits no craving for knowledge; and prefers, in his hours of recreation, indulgence in his rustic pleasures to pursuit of intellectual improvement. . . . the negro never suffers from the thirst for knowledge. Voloptuous and indolent, he knows few but animal pleasures; is incapable of appreciating the pride and pleasure of conscious intellectual refinement; and passes through existence, perhaps with few of the white man's mental enjoyments, but certainly with still fewer of his harassing cares and anxieties. The dance beneath the shade surpasses, for him, the groves of the academy. (pp. 68-70)

This passage is not some bizarre historical oddity. I have quoted it at length because it presents, very clearly, the essence of the argument made against allowing every group from having educational opportunities — except for the wealthy and the leisured. As we trace the history of the fight against democracy in education, we will hear this same argument over and over again, right down to the present day. Only the style and some of the words will change. The key concept will remain: education would "unfit" certain people for their "station in life," interfere with "the performance of the duties" of these workers, and even "prepare" poor and working people for "insurrection."

At the very same time that our unnamed apologist for slavery was holding forth so piously, a battle was raging in the northern states as well as in the south over the question of free public education. The issue was accurately perceived, on both sides, as whether it was fit and proper for poor and working people to become educated, or whether this should be reserved for the wealthy and leisured. In a book on adult education published almost half a century ago, Dorothy Canfield Fisher describes the reactionary arguments:

> There are in American magazines and newspapers from 1815 to 1830 plenty of horrified outcries over the revolutionary, poisonous idea of teaching all children to read and write, even the children of parents who had no money to pay tuition fees. These protests were based on an idea which has always tried its best to prevent mass education, the idea that the purpose of getting an education is to get into a class which does not work; and the equally old fear that (since work must be done), if everybody is allowed to get an education, possibly everybody, **even the educated,** will have to work.[1]

Here is a fairly typical example from 1830 (six years before the publication of *The South Vindicated*):

> Literature cannot be acquired without leisure, and wealth gives leisure. . . . The "peasant" must labor during those hours of the day which his wealthy neighbor can give to the abstract culture of his mind; otherwise, the earth would not yield enough for the subsistence of all: the mechanic cannot abandon the operations of his trade for general studies; if he could, most of the conveniences of life and objects of exchange would be wanting; languor, decay, poverty, discontent would soon be visible among all classes. No government . . . can furnish what is incompatible with the very organization and being of civil society.[4]

So farm laborers and industrial workers should not be educated for the very same reason that slaves and "freed negroes" should not be educated: education would interfere with their appropriate functions in society.

Three quarters of a century later, after the battle for public elementary schools had been basically won, we find the very same argument being used against allowing another group to have higher education: women. In 1904, for example, a university president thus explains how higher education interferes with the proper functions of women: "It is now well established that higher education in this country reduces the rate of both marriage and offspring. . . . I think it established that mental strain in early womanhood is a cause of imperfect mammary function which is the first stage of the slow evolution of sterility."[5] This university president was merely summing up much of the accepted scientific theory of the day, well explained in an article entitled "Higher Education of Women," appearing in *Popular Science Monthly* in 1905:

> Not only does wifehood and motherhood not require an extraordinary development of the brain, but the latter is a decided barrier against the proper performance of these duties. . . . The duties of motherhood are direct rivals of brain work, for they both require for their performance an exclusive and plentiful supply of phosphates. These are obtained from the food in greater or less quantity, but rarely, if ever, in sufficient quantity to supply an active and highly educated intellect, and, at the same time, the wants of the growing child. . . . in this rivalry between the offspring and the intellect how often has not the family physician seen the brain lose in the struggle. The mother's reason totters and falls, in some cases to such an extent as to require her removal to an insane asylum. . . .
>
> . . . most of the generally admitted poor health of women is due to over education, which first deprives them of sunlight and fresh air for the greater part of their time; second, takes every drop of blood away to the brain from the growing organs of generation; third, develops their nervous system at the expense of all their other systems, muscular, digestive, generative, etc.; fourth, leads them to live an abnormal single life until the age of twenty-six or twenty-seven instead of being married at eighteen, which is the latest that nature meant them to remain single; fifth, raises their requirements so high that they can not marry a young man in good health.[6]

Maybe all these arguments against "negroes," workers, and women being educated just sound quaint. Surely, you think, nobody today would come right out and say that poor and working people should not be allowed to have a higher education because that would unfit them for their function and make them dangerous to the existing social order. It's true that most of those who believe this are clever enough not to say it. Besides, they don't have to say it, because they have the power to throttle working-class education by choking off the

funds. But back at Stanford University, where I taught for eleven years, and where they train many of those who make and enforce public policy, they sometimes openly say why they withhold money from public higher education. For instance, this is how it is put by Stanford Professor Roger A. Freeman, former adviser to ex-President Richard M. Nixon:

> We are in danger of producing an educated proletariat. That's dynamite! We have to be selective on who we allow to go through higher education. If not, we will have a large number of highly trained and unemployed people.[7]

Not only the **opponents** of education have seen its potential to subvert the power and ambition of America's rulers. Way back in 1779, Thomas Jefferson tried to get the Virginia legislature to set up public schools. He began his "Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge" with these famous words:

> Whereas it apppeareth that however certain forms of government are better calculated than others to protect individuals in the free exercise of their natural rights, and are at the same time better guarded against degeneracy, yet experience hath shown that, even under the best forms, those entrusted with power have, in time, and by slow operations, perverted it into tyranny; and it is believed that the most effectual means of preventing this would be to illuminate, as far as practical, the minds of the people at large, and more especially to give them knowledge of those facts which history exhibiteth, that possessed thereby of the experience of other ages and countries, they may be enabled to know ambition under all its shapes, and prompt to exert their natural powers to defeat its purposes.[8]

No wonder the Virginia legislature voted down Jefferson's bill!

But Jefferson's position was mild indeed compared to that of a certain adult basic education student of the next century who taught himself to read and then became one of America's greatest authors, Frederick Douglass. Douglass understood that all those who oppose allowing slaves, workers, and all poor and oppressed people to be educated are basically correct, from their point of view. The well-intentioned wife of his master starts to teach him to read, but the master immediately orders her to cease. Douglass' description of what he learned, and how he learned it, gets to the heart of the question we are facing. The master forbids his wife from any further instruction because "it was unlawful, as well as unsafe, to teach a slave to read."

> To use his own words, further, he said, "If you give a nigger an inch, he will take an ell. A nigger should know nothing but to obey his master — to do as he is told to do. Learning would **spoil** the best nigger in the world. Now," said he, "if you teach that nigger (speaking of myself) how to read, there would be no keeping him. It would forever unfit him to be a slave. He would at once become unmanageable, and of no value to his master. As to himself, it could do him no good, but a great deal of harm. It would make him discontented and unhappy."

Here they are again, the familiar arguments we have already heard from another apologist for slavery, from the opponents of public schools for working-class children and higher education for women, from the Stanford professor warning against higher education for the working class today. The deepest lesson for us lies in Douglass' response. We may take his words as a kind of credo for all other adult basic education students:

> These words sank deep into my heart, stirred up sentiments within that lay slumbering, and called into existence an entirely new train of thought. It was a new and special revelation, explaining dark and mysterious things, with which my youthful understanding had struggled, but struggled in vain. I now understood what had been to me a most perplexing difficulty — to wit, the white man's power

> to enslave the black man. It was a grand achievement, and I prized it highly. From that moment, I understood the pathway from slavery to freedom. It was just what I wanted, and I got it at a time when I the least expected it. . . . I was gladdened by the invaluable instruction which, by the merest accident, I had gained from my master. Though conscious of the difficulty of learning without a teacher, I set out with high hope, and a fixed purpose, at whatever cost of trouble, to learn how to read. The very decided manner with which he spoke, and strove to impress his wife with the evil consequences of giving me instruction, served to convince me that he was deeply sensible of the truths he was uttering. It gave me the best assurance that I might rely with the utmost confidence on the results which, he said, would flow from teaching me to read. What he most dreaded, that I most desired. What he most loved, that I most hated. That which to him was a great evil, to be carefully shunned, was to me a great good, to be diligently sought; and the argument which he so warmly urged, against my learning to read, only served to inspire me with a desire and determination to learn.[8]

Well, the battles for elementary and secondary education have been more or less won, at least in principle. The right of all children to attend public schools has been established in law (though very few of these schools, except those in wealthy neighborhoods, have nearly enough financing and, as a result, half the adult population of the United States may still be functionally illiterate[9]). This right was indeed considered a revolutionary demand, one argued for at length in the *Communist Manifesto* (1848). But the victory was won (as the *Communist Manifesto* predicted) because of the requirements of industrial capitalism itself. Industrial capitalism needed a working class with at least a rudimentary education, and its educational requirements have continued to increase with the development of technology and a complex modern society. Workers must be able to read instructions, to file, to type, to fill out forms, to write reports, to follow checklists and technical manuals, etc. etc. Some workers must go on into research, administrative functions, "professional" jobs, etc. As industrial capitalism developed in the second half of the nineteenth century, public institutions of higher learning had to be established, particularly land grant colleges and universities. Scientific and technological education, "pre-professional" training, preparation for the complex work lives of modern society, were obvious necessities. But these demands for a higher and higher education for more and more people have always posed a dangerous problem for the social class that actually runs our society. Yes, the working class needs to know a lot for our society to run, but they better not be allowed to learn too much, or they may soon be running it.

This brings us to the question of the humanities. For that is an area of human values, of understanding what is "good" for the various groups and individuals in society. You can learn, or teach, mathematics, chemistry, horticulture, typing, welding, electrical engineering, astronomy, auto mechanics, cosmetology, and data processing without necessarily having to accept or reject the values and world view of one social class or another. But the humanities **consist** of the conflicting world views and cultural values of different social classes.

Why **not** teach the humanities to adult basic education students? We are now familiar with the reasons: Adult basic education students are too stupid to understand such lofty ideas. Besides, they would have no use for the humanities. And the humanities would unfit these people for useful labor. It might even make them so discontented with their lives they might get rebellious. Furthermore, we don't have the finances to waste on such frills and luxuries; we need all our money for the essential things, such as fighting wars in Southeast Asia, building more and more missiles and bombers, financing our two dozen intelligence agencies, constructing more freeways and bank buildings, and paying to the banks and the big financiers $24,200,000,000 interest per year on the national debt.[10]

But there is another argument, which at first glance looks like the opposite, that turns out to be even more insidious. This is that the humanities **should** be taught to adult basic education students because literature, the arts, philosophy, et cetera have a "civilizing" influence, that if the broad masses of people can appreciate "culture" they will somehow be "better." In other words, poor and working people should be taught to appreciate the elite group that has produced "culture," and thereby learn to be happy with their own proper function in society, which is to provide for the material well being of this cultural elite. This theory has been called "the laying-on of culture." It is the one dominant in the teaching of the humanities throughout our entire educational system from elementary school through graduate school. It is why so many people are turned off to the humanities, or at least to what they think the humanities are.

Let us hear this theory in an undiluted form so we can recognize it for what it is. One of the most influential literary and cultural critics of our time is F. R. Leavis. Back in 1930, at the beginning of another world capitalist crisis, Leavis published the basis for his critical theories in a work entitled **Mass Civilization and Minority Culture.** Here is the underlying assumption in that work:

> In any period it is upon a very small minority that the discerning appreciation of art and literature depends: it is (apart from cases of the simple and familiar) only a few who are capable of unprompted, first-hand judgment. They are still a small minority, though a larger one, who are capable of endorsing such first-hand judgment by genuine personal response. The accepted valuations are a kind of paper currency based upon a very small proportion of gold. To the state of such a currency the possibilities of fine living at any time bear a close relation. . . . The minority capable not only of appreciating Dante, Shakespeare, Donne, Baudelaire, Hardy (to take major instances) but of recognizing their latest successors constitute the consciousness of the race (or of a branch of it) at a given time. . . . Upon this minority depends our power of profiting by the finest human experience of the past; they keep alive the subtlest and most perishable parts of tradition. Upon them depend the implicit standards that order the finer living of an age, the sense that this is worth more than that, this rather than that is the direction in which to go, that the centre is here rather than there. In their keeping . . . is the language, the changing idiom, upon which fine living depends, and without which the distinction of spirit is thwarted and incoherent.[11]

There it is, the essence of elitism, arrogance, pompous snobbery, and contempt for the vast majority of people as being virtually subhuman. And this theory of literature and culture underlies at least nine-tenths of all the courses in the humanities presently being given in this country, whether to children or adults, the rich or the poor.

As much as we may despise this theory, we do have to face the question: Is it true? First of all, is literature and culture in general "civilizing"? Does it make people "better," or, to use Leavis' term, "finer"? Are the most elite professors of literature and cultural critics better, or "finer," people than, say, factory workers? Of course they think they are. But there is certainly no evidence that they are any more generous, loving, perceptive, sensitive, understanding, moral, forthright, charitable, forgiving, determined, brave, honest, good-hearted, or, for that matter, intelligent than most workers. I, for one, who have lived and worked with both groups, would say that this cultural elite comes out second best on every single one of these qualities. But that doesn't get at the core of Leavis' theory.

The key question is: Who, in fact, does create literature and the rest of culture, what Leavis calls "the consciousness of the race"? Is it really a precious, tiny, cultural elite? The plain fact is that this theory is not only outrageous but also preposterous. Literature, the humanities,

culture in general is all created by the masses of the people. It permeates our daily lives. Most of it expresses common concerns, the hopes, fears, thoughts, and passions most of us share. The elite culture taught to us as the essence of "fine living" is just a parasitic little growth on the main body of culture.

So the argument that the masses should be civilized by teaching them elite culture — or rather a proper appreciation of how much finer this culture is than their own — is really an argument for teaching only a tiny portion of literature, the humanities, culture in general. That is, it is an argument for **not** teaching people the great majority of culture. It substitutes that tiny part, a very unrepresentative part, for the whole. And it mainly teaches us to have disdain and contempt for our own culture and our own creative potential (and to have a proper reverence for the cultural elite).

Let's take poetry, for example. Most people in this country have had some exposure to poetry in a classroom. I am willing to bet that the typical reaction after the poetry class is, "Well, I guess poetry is just not for me." Then this same student will turn on the radio and listen to — poetry. But now that student has been trained to think of poetry as that incomprehensible stuff in the classroom and to think of the poetry on the radio as something else altogether. Why? Because it is sung, because it is about common life, because it is understandable, and (mainly) because "I like it, and I've been taught I don't have good taste."

But what is poetry anyhow, and where did it come from? Is it the product of a handful of sensitive geniuses mooning around in their studies or pouring out their souls to nightingales and elegant ladies? Some of it is. that's true. But not very much. Poetry originally developed directly from physical labor. Most of it has not been private but collective. And the overwhelming mass of poetry has been created by poor and working people.[12]

In order to survive, people have always had to work together. In order to work together, it is often necessary for people to join together in rhythm and word. This was particularly true in some of the earliest forms of human labor, such as lifting large weights, paddling a canoe, reaping grain, digging, herding animals, marching long distances, and so on. Thus the earliest poetry came from the rhythmical movements of human bodies engaged in collective labor and joining their wills together with collective words. Music and dance emerge together with poetry. They come to be separated only much later, and this separation has never been complete for most poor and working people. Poetry, music, dance — all do have one very private source, the beat of one's own individual heart. Our sense of rhythm as human beings springs from that which is most private, the pulsing rhythms of our own bodies. But this private beat is made public, shared, collective, in poetry, music, and dance. Singing and dancing together, people link their private rhythms into a collective rhythmic time and verbal meaning.

This is the primal source of all poetry. Understanding poetry from this viewpoint allows us to explore some of the richest parts of our own literary and cultural heritage, especially the tremendous interrelated achievements of Afro-American music and poetry.[13]

The slaves kidnapped from West Africa brought with them their own musical and poetic tradition. It was polyphonic, quite different from European poetry and music. The white slaveowners made it a crime for the slaves to use their native languages, instruments, songs, and dances. So the slaves adopted the English language, together with English music and religious symbolism, and adapted these directly to the survival needs of their slave labor situation. Hence arose the original slave worksongs, with their veiled content (alluding to escape and rebellion), and the gospel songs, which often retain both the code words and the subversive content.

Frigates
Plying the North Atlantic,
Engaged in the
"Black Gold" trade that
Was the cornerstone of
Mercantilism, Capitalism/Americanism.
Cinque had the Brothers Dancing to the Rhythms
As he rallied them to make
Their bid
For Freedom, Justice & Equality;
Toussaint, Christophe and Desalines
Rocked Haiti with some of that
Good ole 18th Century Rock 'n' Roll
And they (still keeping time to the beat)
Rolled the Little Corsican's
Inflated Empirical dreams
Back to the hills from which they came;
Nat, Denmark and Gabriel
Assembled their troops
To the same strains,
When they took their shot.
Now, we got
Curtis and Ra
And Rahsan Roland Kirk
And Sisters Kim, Aretha, Elaine and Nina
(Bird, Trane, "O" and the Lady
Were saying it, too,
Before overexposure — To a blinding snowstorm —
Wasted them/But they weren't wasted)
Wicked Wilson, Leon Thomas, Lou Donaldson and Pharoah Sanders.
LISTEN! ! !
They talkin' at
YOU,
They tryin' to **tell** *you somethin'.*
Got the message?
It say —
OUR DAY HAVE COME.[15]

T. J. Reddy is a fine Afro-American poet who has been imprisoned through the sinister dealings of Robert Mardian and the "Justice" Department. His first volume of poems, *Less Than a Score, But a Point*, published in 1974 (Vintage paperback), filled with the sense that he is reliving the kidnap and enslavement of his ancestors, contains many poems about the underlying source and meaning of poetry. In "A Poem for Black Rhythmeticians," he renders human history in the course of poetry's rhythms, beginning in humanity's African womb:

The drum is the heartbeat
Of mother Africa
As she shapes life and
Gives birth
To the world

These slave songs still survive as a living art in the songs of modern slave labor, sung by Black prisoners forced to work together out in the swamps, fields, forests, and construction. Many of these songs have been transcribed.[14] Some have actually been recorded, giving us the opportunity to hear a very old kind of poetry in what is probably fairly close to its original form. For example, there is a version of "Po' Laz'rus" recorded at Camp B, Mississippi State Penitentiary at Lambert by Alan Lomax (on Prestige/International 25009). This is a chopping or flatweeding song. The men singing it are performing a kind of labor that requires them all to make their bodies move to the same beat. The gang swings their axes (or hoes, in other versions) high in the air, and then must bring them down all at once. The only instrument is the axes (or hoes) themselves as they strike, and thus strike the beat. The men sing about a mythic figure, a legendary Black Bad Man, who defies law and order. They project onto Lazarus their own feelings of defiance and rebellion, and the song ends with the killing of Lazarus by the sheriff and the mournful lamentations of the prisoners. The monotonous chop of their axes is transmuted into punctuation and an emphatic beat for the words of their wistful poem.

These singers, like the slaves of the southern cottonfields, are literally chained to the very rhythms of work which made the song necessary. They are forced back in historical time to an admirable, but still primitive, poetic and musical achievement. When chattel slavery ended, Afro-American music and poetry was gradually able to move to much richer forms and content. With the development of so-called classical blues, Afro-American music was able to move away from the adopted European form and content, bringing out specifically Afro-American experience and sometimes even hints of African musical form. As **jazz** developed, this movement became increasingly conscious. Bebop, a distinctively Black form, was expropriated by white bands in the so-called cool jazz of the 1950's. The response was a body of Black jazz innovation variously known as **funky** or **soul** or **hard rock.** This was characterized by the conscious adoption of African forms and themes, as Black nationalism grew rapidly among Black jazz musicians, faster than among any other section of the Black population with the possible exception of prison inmates.

And there, in prison, have been created some of the most important contributions to Afro-American culture — and to American culture — of the last decade, the decade since Malcolm's death. Black prison poets have taken the history of Afro-American music, together with some of its formal achievements, and turned it into magnificent poetry.

A good example is a recent poem from Malcolm's alma mater, Norfolk Prison, by James Lang, entitled "Listen To Your Heartbeat," a title taking us back to the primal source of human poetry:

Listen To Your Heartbeat
Magical melodies
Emanating from the East
Not really meant for
Tuneless, colorless
Ears:
Originating in the
Heartlands of the Blacklands,
They JAMMED their way
Across the ocean,
Sung in the funky
(Funky with Black sweat, Black wastes, Black blood
And from European presences & breath)
Holds of

The drum, that amplifier of our own heart, is linked to words from our brain, and it pounds out the rhythms of day and night, of the labor of the tribe, of its councils, of love-making. The rhythms themselves come to express meanings projected by talking drums, drums simulating the sounds of words:

The drums sounded the warning
Oppressors are coming
Oppressors are coming
And when slavers discovered
How much we communicated
With music they could not understand
They took up our drums
But not our rhythm.

Reddy follows his ancestors as they pound out next the songs of slavery and imprisonment on the plantations and then the blues that take up the rhythms of urban poverty. In the final stanza, the primal force of life, pulsing in rhythm, breaks down the walls of his prison as he returns to the simple measured beat of

Now for freedom is not too soon
Now for freedom is not too soon

I have gone into some detail here to give you a sense of what poetry is, and why it should be taught to adult basic education students. More than that, I hope that by thinking about the achievement of Afro-American music and poetry, people will be able to discover the real truth about some of the arguments we looked at in opposition to mass education. One of the defenses of slavery, for example, was that while the Blacks were doing the manual labor, their white masters would thus have sufficient leisure to develop a fine culture (what F. R. Leavis later calls "fine living"). Literature, the arts, and the humanities supposedly flourished among the slaveholders. But can anyone think of **any** cultural, literary, or philosophical achievements of that leisured class of slaveholders? Where is **their** poetry, their music, their literature? What writer have they produced on the level of Frederick Douglass? Right here in Missouri, where is the pre-Civil War slave-owning writer who can compare to William Wells Brown, another famous adult basic education student, America's first Black novelist and dramatist? When William Wells Brown, a Black slave, taught himself how to read and write here in this state, he was commiting a crime.

Let's take another example. The authorities on culture now grant that Herman Melville was a very great writer. Many people consider him the greatest writer yet produced by America. The United States government has even issued a Moby Dick postage stamp in his honor. F. R. Leavis would have us believe that there is always "a very small minority" who have "the discerning appreciation of art and literature," that they "constitute the consciousness of the race" because they have the ability of "recognizing" the great writers and artists of their own generation and preserving them for the rest of us, or rather for those few of us who are perceptive enough to listen to these authorities. Well, if we check out this theory in the case of Herman Melville, we find it was these cultural authorities who condemned him as an ignorant and ungrammatical sailor, a crude boor, a menace to society, etc., who forced him to stop trying to write for a living, and who almost succeeded in burying him permanently.

Melville had to drop out of school to help support his family. It was the world of work that turned him into a literary artist and that forged his creative imagination. Laboring under the most oppressive conditions inflicted on "free" workers in the mid-nineteenth century, as a sailor on whaleships, merchant ships, and a warship, he saw U.S. society and its commercial empire through the eyes of a class-conscious proletarian.

Several times he rebelled against these conditions. He refused to work, committing the "crimes" of desertion and mutiny. Once he even planned the murder of his captain. His labor and his rebellion provide the essential subject matter for all his fiction, from his first book to his last unfinished work, *Billy Budd*. He was yet another adult basic education student, who never quite mastered spelling and the "proper" rules of grammar.

But Melville understood that he was doomed by his times to write to an audience that contained hardly any poor and working people. In 1846, the year of his first novel, the battle for even elementary public education had not yet been won. The people who then read novels and romances mainly consisted of more or less wealthy gentlemen and ladies with leisure and a most polite education. And of course the elite who decided what should be published and what should be recommended in reviews were all highly cultured gentlemen.

So Melville begins his career as a literary artist by trying to open up some communication with this polite audience, trying to tell them how the world is experienced and envisioned by the people who labor to provide all their comforts. The very first paragraph of his first book, *Typee*, ends with these words, a defiant but would-be educational statement by an oppressed worker to the people he serves:

> Oh! ye state-room sailors, who make so much ado about a fourteen-days' passage across the Atlantic; who so pathetically relate the privations and hardships of the seas, where, after a day of breakfasting, lunching, dining off five courses, chatting, playing whist, and drinking champagne-punch, it was your hard lot to be shut up in little cabinets of mahogany and maple, and sleep for ten hours, with nothing to disturb you but "those good-for-nothing tars, shouting and tramping over your head," — what would ye say to our six months out of sight of land?

The cultural authorities responded by forcing Melville to issue this book the following year in a highly censored version. For instance, Melville had to delete the entire passage I just quoted.

Melville realized right away that his art would be perceived by his polite audience as just more "shouting and tramping" by one of "those good-for-nothing tars" disturbing their slumber. Some of the literary gentlemen of his time indulged at first in a certain amount of amusement at the spectacle of this "reading sailor spinning a yarn" with "nothing to indicate the student or the scholar." It was as if one of those chimpanzees we have recently taught to read were to write an account of his adventures. But they were quick to point out that this ignorant sailor should not be taken seriously, because "Mr. Melville's mind, though vigorous enough, has not been trained in those studies which enable men to observe with profit."[16]

But Melville persisted in exposing the essence of nineteenth-century capitalist society, a dictatorship of wealthy parasites whose political economy reduces all human relationships to grotesque, sterile, exploitative money relationships. His next four books, all largely autobiographical, described the enslaved conditions of sailors, the savage destruction of Pacific societies by European and U.S. imperialism, the terrifying poverty of urban industrial capitalism, the unbridled warmaking tendencies of military officers as a class. Then came *Moby Dick* (1851). Some reviewers admired its "wildness," but the judgment soon to be put into effect was this one, which moved from his previous three books to *Moby-Dick*:

> "Redburn" was a stupid failure, "Mardi" was hopelessly dull, "White-Jacket" was worst than either; and, in fact, it was such a very bad book, that, until the appearance of "Moby-Dick," we had set it down as the very ultimate of weakness to which its author could attain. It seems, however, that we were mistaken.[17]

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Melville's next book was *Pierre*. The cultural elite was now unanimous in condemning him. Even people he had considered his friends among the literary gentlemen deserted him and called for silencing this rude barbarian before he could do any more damage to polite society. The leading review began with the words, "A bad book!" It goes on to explain that an ignorant, ungrammatical, crude man like Melville should only be allowed to write about such primitive beings as "South Sea savages" and sailors:

> We can afford Mr. Melville full license to do what he likes with "Omoo" and its inhabitants; it is only when he presumes to thrust his tragic *Fantoccini* upon us, as representatives of our own race, that we feel compelled to turn our critical Aegis upon him, and freeze him into silence . . . he strikes with an impious, though, happily, weak hand, at the very foundations of society. . . .
>
> We have, we think, said sufficient to show our readers that Mr. Melville is a man wholly unfitted for the task of writing wholesome fictions; that he possesses none of the faculties necessary for such work; that his fancy is diseased, his morality vitiated, his style nonsensical and ungrammatical, and his characters as far removed from our sympathies as they are from nature.
>
> Let him continue, then, if he must write, his pleasant sea and island tales. We will always be happy to hear Mr. Melville discourse about savages. . .

The critical aegis of polite society was successful. First Melville was driven underground, forced to write for several years anonymously and under pseudonyms. He finally gave us his career as a professional writer in 1857, with the last book of fiction to be published in his lifetime. When he died in 1891, 34 years later, there were three obituaries, one calling him "Hiram" Melville. Melville remained unknown, his works excluded from the canon of American literature, until well after World War I. And it was not until after World War II that Melville's writings became generally deemed fit for part of an education in the humanities for any students, let alone adult basic education students.

Like Frederick Douglass, his contemporary and fellow adult education student, Melville was keenly aware of his alienation from the academic world of higher education. And he saw a fundamental contradiction between that academic world and the world in which he received his true education, his artistic training, and all that was worthy about him as a human being — the world of the worker. As he puts it in *Moby-Dick*, speaking with the thinnest disguise through his persona Ishmael:

> And, as for me, if, by any possibility, there be any as yet undiscovered prime thing in me; if I shall ever deserve any real repute in that small but high hushed world which I might not be unreasonably ambitious of; if hereafter I shall do anything that, upon the whole, a man might rather have done that to have left undone; if at my death, my executors, or more properly my creditors, find any precious MSS. in my desk, then here I prospectively ascribe all the honor and glory to whaling; for a whale-ship was my Yale College and my Harvard.

Herman Melville and the vast achievements of Afro-American literature are not alone in deriving their inspiration and meaning from labor, poverty, and oppression, rather than from the refinements of a college education. The greatest author from the state of Missouri, Mark Twain, left school at the age of 12. Another Missouri author, Kate Chopin, got her main education from being a wife and the mother of six children; although the strain of intellectual activity did not "require her removal to an insane asylum" (as that 1905 foe of educating women put it), what she had to say about a woman's conventional role in marriage led to the removal of her finest novel, *The Awakening* (1899), from the St. Louis Library, universal condemnation by the literary gentlemen, and a silencing as effective as

that imposed on Melville. Jack London's formal education ended at the age of fourteen. Although Eugene O'Neill had a year of college, his main education, like that of London and Melville, came working on ships. One of the unheralded great writers of our century, Agnes Smedley, describes in her autobiographical novel *Daughter of Earth* how work and poverty taught her both her art and her subject. Stephen Crane left college after a year, during which he got a zero in composition, in order, as he put it, to "recover from college." Benjamin Franklin was not only a self-taught writer but also the founder and a continuing member of the first formal adult education class in America (the Junto). And so on.

None of this is meant in any way to be an argument against higher education. All the writers I have cited by name did have to study the humanities, one way or another. Many other excellent writers did their study of the humanities at institutions of higher education. Furthermore, the colleges and universities of today, not to mention the high schools, community colleges, adult education courses, etc., are no longer the nearly-fenced preserve of the rich, the leisured, and the loyal spokesmen of their cultural values. Instead, they are all battlegrounds where there rages a fierce, and historic, struggle between two world views.

In the past, some have painted a picture of the humanities as a calm, elegant, land of blissful harmony. Then they have politely disrupted about whether people such as adult basic education students should be allowed to enter this land in order to get "civilized" and "cultured," to learn the exquisite pleasures of "fine living." The humanities were not now and never have been any such harmonious world. The proof of this is literally in hand: all the authors I have cited are part of the humanities, and so, for that matter, is this paper itself. On one side of this roaring battlefield stand the apologists for slavery and the culture of the slaveholders, the writers of essays against public schools, the university presidents and scientists who argue that higher education for women will dry up their breasts and shrink their sexual organs, the cultural and literary critics who believe only themselves and a precious handful of other fine people can appreciate art and understand life. On the other side are Frederick Douglass and William Wells Brown, Agnes Smedley and Jack London, Herman Melville and Mark Twain, all of those nameless Afro-American slaves and their descendants who created the most original parts of American culture. (Obviously this paper is written by a partisan on the latter side.) The outcome of this cultural battle will have a lot to do with determining the future destiny of humanity. And that is the main reason why the 30 to 40 million American adults who have not been allowed even an adequate secondary education should have the opportunity to study the humanities and participate in deciding the outcome of the struggle.

Then there are the other reasons. Poor and working people have produced much of the literary, artistic, and philosophic culture that constitutes the humanities. Why then should the study of the humanities be limited to those with leisure and family wealth? I am not arguing that the study of the humanities should be limited to that culture produced by poor and working people. After all, if the children of the well-to-do now find it useful to study the culture of the people they rule, it could certainly be useful for the people to study the culture of their rulers, not to emulate it, but to comprehend its social function, as Frederick Douglass and Herman Melville did.

Not only do most of the humanities come from the experience of poor and working people, but it is the working class that produces the actual books that contain the written record of that culture. Working people also produce all the other means to propagate culture: television sets, radios, studios, movie cameras, printing presses, musical instruments, phonograph records, libraries, classroom buildings, paper, ink, typewriters, even pens and pencils. Why produce books and records and movies you are not allowed to study and enjoy? Why build and maintain schools and universities you are not allowed to use?

Some may argue that there is no longer enough money, the economy being what it is, to finance the teaching of the humanities to adult basic education students. I think nobody should be deprived of a full public education. But if anybody is to be denied that right, the last people should be those most entitled to it, the people who have been deprived of their own cultural inheritance. The ability to suck wealth out of society, or rather choosing to be born to parents with the ability to suck wealth out of society, should hardly be the main criterion for being allowed to study the humanities.

And while we are talking about money, let's face the fact that it is the working class that is paying for almost all education, including higher education, both public and private. Not only are all the public elementary schools, high schools, colleges, and universities financed by taxes, but well over 60% of the operating budget of the so-called private colleges and universities is coming out of public funds deriving from taxes. These taxes are all either imposed directly on workers or on profits made from the exploitation of these workers (and others around the world). Why should the working class finance the education of the rich to the exclusion of its own education? And why should it have to pay for education to benefit the rich, the teaching of humanities by professors selected mostly on the basis of their contempt and disdain for the culture of the broad masses of the people? But nobody has to be denied full public education. All we have to do is stop spending over ten times as much of our federal funds on the military as we do on education for the people. In 1974, the United States government spent a total of $76.3 million on adult education, and much of this consisted of courses and programs for members of the armed forces. The allocation for 1975 is $67.5 million, and the same figure is proposed for 1976. Yet we learn that in three weeks the revolutionary forces in Vietnam captured more than $3 billion in U.S. military equipment abandoned by the Saigon army, whose salaries were also paid by the U.S. working class. We also discover that Howard Hughes and the C.I.A. were given $350 million to salvage one-third of a Soviet submarine. So our government has decided that one-third of a Soviet submarine is worth five times as much as the annual education of adult Americans! If those running our affairs aren't intelligent enough to figure out how to finance adult education, then we will have to learn whatever is necessary to run our own affairs. That is the final reason why the humanities should be studied by adult basic education students.

One final word. There is no way to conceal the fact that I have shifted our topic around slightly, by approaching it not so much from the point of view of the teachers and those in charge of our tax monies as from the point of view of the students and potential students. Instead of asking "Why teach the humanities to adult basic education students?", I have tried to show why adult basic education students should demand the right to study the humanities — and in a way that suits their needs and desires.

Footnotes

[1]This was the famous case of Missouri *ex rel.* Gaines v Canada, Registrar of the University of Missouri, *et al.*

[2]Cited in Edgar W. Knight and Clifton Hall, Readings in *American Educational History* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1951), p. 664.

[3]Dorothy Canfield Fisher, *Why Stop Learning?* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1927), pp. 5-6.

[4]"An Argument against Public Schools," *Philadelphia National Gazette*, July 10, 1830. Quoted in Knight and Hall, p. 149.

[5]G. Stanley Hall, President of Clark University. Quoted in Knight and Hall, p. 722.

[6]I am indebted to Professor Joan Hedrick for these quotations from A. L. Smith, "Higher Education of Women," *Popular Science Monthly*, 66 (March, 1905), pp. 467, 469.

[7]"Professor Sees Peril in Education," *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 30, 1970.

[8]*Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave* (1845 edition), (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday-Dolphin, 1963), pp. 36-37.

[9]The results of a 1970 Harvard study and a supporting poll by Louis Harris and Associates for the National Reading Council. See "Functional Illiteracy Found High in U.S. In Study at Harvard," *New York Times*, May 20, 1970, and "Startling Report: The U.S. Adults Who Can't Read," *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 12, 1970.

[10]The 1973 figure, relatively low in comparison with current figures. Source: *The Statistical Abstract of the U.S.: 1975* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1974), p. 233.

[11]Quoted in Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society* (London: Penguin Books, 1963), p. 247.

[12]For an extensive treatment of the ideas summed up here and in the following paragraph, see Christopher Caudwell, *Illusion and Reality: A Study of the Sources of Poetry* (N.Y.: International Publishers, 1963) and George Thomson, *Marxism and Poetry* (N.Y.: International Publishers, 1946).

[13]Two of the best treatments of this history are LeRoi Jones (Imamu Amiri Baraka), *Blues People* (N.Y.: William Morrow & Co., 1963) and Frank Kofsky, *Black Nationalism and the Revolution in Music* (N.Y.: Pathfinder Press, 1970).

[14]See Bruce Jackson, *Wake Up Dead Man: Afro-American Worksongs from Texas Prisons* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972).

[15]In *Who Took the Weight? Black Voices from Norfolk Prison* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1972), pp. 57-58.

[16]*The Spectator*, February 28, 1846. Compare Leavis' words: "Upon this minority depends our power of **profit**ing by the finest human experience of the past. . . ." (Emphasis mine.)

[17]*United States Magazine and Democratic Review*, January, 1852.

[18]George Washington Peck, *American Whig Review*, November, 1852.

CHAPTER III

THE HUMANITIES IN ADULT BASIC EDUCATION: A MEANS OF ACHIEVING PRODUCTIVE INDIVIDUALITY

by Carmen Rodriguez

Every human being has both the right and the responsibility to develop his personhood to his or her fullest potential, i.e., to become a "Productive Individual." Erich Fromm, a renowned sociopsychoanalyst, has clearly defined his idea of a "productive individual." In his book *Social Character In A Mexican Village*, Fromm lists the following five qualities as defining a "productive individual" as one who has:

1. Self-knowledge (he knows who he is; he is aware of his gifts, capacities and limitations; he has self-esteem and feels a dignity about who he is.)
2. Love of Self (he has self-respect and a good feeling about who he is.)
3. Self-Conviction (he has a feeling about his own authority and his personal convictions; he is so sure of what he thinks and believes, that the ideas and thoughts of his fellow men do not force him to alter his convictions, although he may freely choose to do so.)
4. A consciousness about what is going on around him; he is observant.
5. Creativity (he does not always conform, for the sake of conformity, to what he sees and is told; he thinks, questions, seeks out answers, and makes his **own** decisions.)

Adult Basic Education Programs must take Mr. Fromm's ideas about a "productive individual" seriously. In doing so, it will be seen that reading, writing, and arithmetic are not enough. The Humanities must be incorporated.

Just as seeds depend upon some outside nutrients or energy to enable them to grow, so do the "seeds" for development of the human potential depend upon outside nutrients to help them to take root, grow, blossom, and bear fruit. In many cases, the "seeds" for potential growth, within some individuals, have not been given the nutrients needed for their maximum fruition.

Education is one of the most important nutrients on which most individuals depend for maximum development throughout their lives. Theoretically, one could become self-educated. Realistically, this is not the case. We are products of both the social environment interacting with us as well as of we, in turn, interacting with that environment. This socialization process continues throughout our lifetime, and should be the key objective of a successful educational system.

Adult Basic Education is a societal response to the life-long learning needs of adult individuals who have not been effectively educated by traditional institutions. Therefore, the Adult Basic Education Programs have the awesome, but necessary role of stimulating growth toward, and providing the nutrients for, the development of the total human potential. Such an institutional role calls for acceptance of individuals for what they are **at that time** in their lives. It also calls for assuming the responsibility of providing personal and social knowledge such that individuals might be free to make choices from valid alternatives about what they want to do with their lives. If there is no such freedom, however, the responsibility of accepting the consequences for those choices falls not only on the individuals, but also on the existing societal institutions.

Provision of social knowledge by Adult Basic Education Programs has emphasized, thus far, the development of the Three R's as coping skills so as to prepare an individual for employment. This is merely **training** an individual, not **educating** him. What has not been given equal emphasis thus far, are the spiritual and aesthetic components of man. Adult Basic Education should give equal emphasis to both of these aspects of man's personhood.

The training emphasis involves heavy reliance upon the natural and social sciences, which are concerned with explanations for **what exists,** and which stimulate conformity to norms. In contrast, the Humanities are concerned with **what could be.** They reflect unique, creative ideas which can supersede what exists, and which can elevate man to a higher plane. If the Adult Basic Education Programs are to educate the "whole man," the Humanities should become an integral part of their curricula.

Let me point out two experiences in which the Humanities helped me become a "productive individual." In one, I was a learner; in the other, I was a teacher.

I am a Mexican American. My mother tongue is Spanish. When I began my kindergarten year, I knew very little English. I thought I was a slow learner all thirteen years of my educational experience through high school. I was lucky in that my parents instilled in a pride for my "mexicanidad" or "Mexicanness." I was also lucky in that most of my teachers helped develop that pride. At least, they accepted me for what I was. That pride and the support which I got both at home and at school (I was lucky, for many of my Mexican peers were not receiving that support), encouraged me to seek further knowledge. I delved into various areas of learning. I questioned. I probed. I learned to think for myself.

During my junior and senior years in high school, I went to work so that I could save enough money to go to college. When I began my college studies, I enrolled in music, art appreciation, European civilization, and literature classes. I learned about Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, Chopin, Rembrandt, Raphael, Picasso, Rodin, Shakespeare, Tolstoy, Longfellow, Frost, Plato, Joan of Arc, etc. I learned little or nothing about my own people's contributions to the world. But, I had become inquisitive. So, on my own, I learned about my Mexican heritage and its contributions to world civilization. I found out about Netzahaulcoyotl, Quetzalcoatl, Manzanero, Lara, Negrete, Chavez, Rivera, Siqueiros, Orozco, Juana de la Cruz, Nervo, Azuela, etc.

This learning changed my life. It gave meaning to everything else that I had learned. It was a part of me! It gave me an excitement for learning that I had never had before. Suddenly, with this relevant learning that was taking place within me, I realized that I was neither a dummy nor a slow learner! I was not someone who was going to be trampled on. I had learned to think for myself, to make decisions, and to accept the responsibility that comes with decision-making.

I have a long way to go yet, but I do consider myself a successfully "productive individual" in today's society. This all came to a peak through my own studies of the Humanities. How much simpler and less frustrating it would have been had I achieved this earlier in my life through classes and with group encouragement!

Some may argue that my hard-learned lessons were possible because of the basic Three R's training I had had previously. I agree, but I must also add, very emphatically, that it is possible to achieve productive individuality even when one can read and write only at a comparatively low level! This brings me to my second personal experience. In this next case, I was the teacher.

Last year, I taught a course in Mexican American Cultural History through Donnelly Community College, in Kansas City, Kansas. I taught the class in an Extension Center located in the Mexican American community. Most of the students had no problem with basic skills, but about ten of them were at a fourth grade reading level or lower. Most of these ten persons had been away from a classroom for more than twenty-five years. At least three of these students had not finished high school. One of them did not even know how to find the author of a book! The students had one thing in common — they were all excited and fearful of the new learning experience.

The course content included not only political history, but also the music, dance, architecture, sculpture, painting, literature (mostly poetry), and philosophy of Mexico from Pre-Columbian times to the present.

I saw exciting things happen in that class. The students were learning about their history and about the contributions of their people to world civilization. They were learning about themselves, and they felt good about what they were learning. They were not used to hearing good things about Mexicans. What they learned gave them a sense of pride, self-esteem and self-respect. They learned to read and write better than they could upon entrance into the class. They learned to make book reports as well as critiques; they had the experience of making reports in front of an audience. They were frightened in the beginning, of course, but they learned to overcome their fear. They learned to assemble ideas, to be critical of what they read, to think for themselves, and to defend their points of view. They learned to question the teacher, and to not be fearful of criticizing and thinking for themselves.

I attribute the success of this class to the relevancy of its content to the students, and to the methodology used for class presentations.

It was a renaissance experience for most of them because it stimulated the growth of that "seed" of potential which had been lying dormant in most of them for so many years. I quote one of the students who made this remark during one of the coffee breaks: "Isn't it a goddam shame that I'm just now learning about my history? Here I am, fifty-two years old and I'm just now learning this. Why in the hell didn't I learn this before?"

I responded by saying, "You answer that question yourself!" He did by saying that he thought that the teachers probably did not know anything about Mexican American culture either!

Now, if I may make a transition from my personal experiences to a broader context about the Humanities in general, and my own cultural history in particular, the question might be asked. "How can the Humanities be incorporated into the curriculum of Adult Basic Education classes when many of the teachers in those programs are not familiar with their students' minority group contributions to the Humanities?"

Addressing myself first to the Adult Basic Education teachers and administrators, Paulo Freire (a world-renowned authority on education in the Third World) has clearly pointed out one salient concept on education. This concept emphasizes the fact that the content of the curriculum should reflect and be relevant to the culture and daily lives of the learners. It should deal with questions of group importance and group interest.

Presuming that the majority of the students enrolled in Adult Basic Education classes are members of some minority group, then cultural studies of those minority groups should be learned by the teachers. This calls for massive teacher in-service training in the cultures of the principal minority groups in the United States. Such in-service training should incorporate methodology by which teachers can combine the Humanities aspects of the minority-group students whom they serve, within their respective grammar units. These grammar units could be based on personal stories which evolve from classroom conversations about the students' own experiences. These autobiographical conversations could be transcribed and analyzed for reading content, as well as grammatical structure, with very little expense to the Adult Basic Education budget.

A series of these conversations could take story form, and be further developed into a student "reader." Along with the development of the student's "reader," other biographical sketches of notable minority-group personalities could be introduced. The student might then be encouraged to compare and contrast these role models, so as to grow

in self-knowledge, self-esteem, and self-motivation.

Some of these role models could be utilized to make further departures for studies of their contributions to the Humanities. Thus, aspects of the Humanities, other than literature, could be introduced into the standard Adult Basic Education curriculum.

By careful selection of key individuals who represent the spectrum of the Humanities, Adult Basic Education students could become familiar with the range of Humanities contributors within their minority-group cultures. The following gives a brief summary of how some individuals could be used as examples:

1. Agustin Lara, a famous Mexican composer whose songs have been translated into English, could be used for the study of music, its lyrics (vocabulary), symbolism (grammatical structure), rhythm (mathematics), etc.
2. Jose Clemente Orozco, a world-renowned muralist, could be studied as an insight to the art form as social protest and as a historical perspective of the Mexican Revolution.
3. Amado Nervo, poet, could be studied for his philosophy and life, as well as his poetic form.
4. Amalia Hernandez, dancer and choreographer for the Ballet Folklorico de Mexico, could be studied for dance forms, musical contributions of the indigenous peoples of Mexico, utilization of color, costuming, and dramatics.

In addition to implementation of the Humanities into the standard Adult Basic Education curriculum in the above-suggested manner, high concentrations of Adult Basic Education learners from a particular minority group, would justify inclusion of an in-depth Humanities-oriented course(s). In the latter case, this would incur higher costs. However, if the priorities for educating an individual to his fullest potential are taken seriously, then ways and means can be found for the payment of the implementation of these courses into the curriculum.

Each above-mentioned alternative can provide the requirements for stimulated self-growth. Each area provides ample room for creativity, critical thinking, free decision-making, consciousness of life in the environment, self-knowledge, self-esteem, and love of self. In other words, all of the areas can fulfill Fromm's prerequisites for a "productive individual."

Secondly, I address myself to the Adult Basic Education students and their respective communities. Educational institutions exist so that they may provide learning areas that are necessary for your personal growth and development. They exist so that they may fulfill your needs. If they do not do this, then they are not fulfilling their roles.

You, as members of the communities which they serve, have a **right to insist** that they provide you with the courses which you need. Before you can insist upon the implementation of certain courses which you may feel you need, you must know what it is that you need, and you must not be afraid, ashamed, or hesitant to ask for whatever that "need" might be. The day is long past when you do only what you are told without deciding for yourself or without making constructive criticisms. You pay your taxes and you have a right to ask, from your educational institutions, for whatever you feel might be an educational need for you.

Just exactly what is it that you need? Do you really feel that reading, writing, and arithmetic are enough for you, or do you feel that there are other aspects of your humanness that need educating also? Are you going to be satisfied all your life with what you are now, or do you want to nurture the "seeds" of your potential as much as possible? If the latter is the case,

then you will want to learn more about what other people think (philosophy), and what other people say through their writings (literature), sculpture, painting, architecture (art), music and dance. You will want to further develop your appreciation for and understanding of the Humanities.

To do this, you do not need to attend concerts, classical dances or operas. You do not need to buy many books. In fact, you need not spend much money at all! Your public libraries have plenty of books available for your use. The local museums and art galleries are filled with materials in the Humanities area. Then, there are the window decorations of your local department stores, the advertisements you see on the streets and in your local newspapers, your home decorations, your garden, your table settings, even a flower pot — all of these can be appreciated for their form, balance, style, color combinations, etc. They all have beauty that you can further discover and further appreciate.

Then, there are those many programs on television, which are filled with possible enrichment for you. Are you satisfied with merely turning on the TV, watching some programs and then turning it off again? Or, would you like to get more out of television than just "watching" any show?

Why not look for symbolism and philosophies of life in the movies that you watch? Why not look for balance, artistic form, movement, rhythm, rhyme, and use of color in the "entertainment" type programs? Why not watch programs which deal specifically with the Humanities? Such programs as "The Ascent of Man," "America," "The Romantic Rebellion," and "Civilization" are televised nationally.

Some of you might say that you do not like those programs or that you do not know what to look for in such programs. You may be correct. If you are, then perhaps that is one of the needs which the educational institutions should help you further develop. This would involve the teaching of the Humanities.

As long as you live, there will be the posisbility of developing those spiritual and aesthetic components within you. First, however, YOU must recognize the fact that those "seeds" for personal growth and development are within you. YOU must recognize your right and responsibility to continually develop those "seeds" to their fullest potential. YOU must want to work toward that development. YOU must ask, from your educational institutions, for those courses necessary to help you educate your "whole" person. YOU must be free to make choices and willing to accept the responsibility for your choices. YOU must be free to become the person that you want to be and which you should become — a "productive individual."

Now, to all of you I say, remember that the teaching and learning of the Humanities is simpler than it may seem, and far more rewarding than you might think. If you are to fertilize that "seed" which develops the fullest potential of the "whole" person (this is your responsibility), then the implementation of the Humanities into Adult Basic Education courses is a must.

CHAPTER IV

THE HUMANITIES: A BRIEF VIEW OF POTENTIAL POWER

by Walter Bradford

The question is crazed. In order to get the most from what it means, its irony, we must look at the history which makes it necessary to bring it up.

The American system of education and the society out of which it grows, was created, designed and is maintained to promote ignorance, classism and racism among people commonly referred to as "minorities." These groups of humans are somtimes white, usually Blacks or Indians or Spanish in origin and speech. But all are poor, have no money, power, or access to either.

When the Constitution of the United States was written, it was not in behalf of these people I've described. In fact, it was written by white people for their own use and advantage as opposed to those people called minorities.

> But never yet could I find that a black had offered a thought above the level of plain narration, never seen an elementary trait of painting and sculpture.

That was Thomas Jefferson, a writer of the constitution, statesman, American historical hero, and White.

White Americans realized before and after slavery that the quality and the amount of education Blacks received was not something abstract but explosive politically and economically; and economics is the one element that is more precious than life itself to the people who run the world, and this country.

Early settlers in America came equipped with a culture/language that had experienced Beowulf, the great English epic poem in the vernacular. Chaucer, Christopher Marlowe, Sir Walter Raleigh, and William Shakespeare each established his greatness in the English language and died before the first black slave arrived in Jamestown, at least a year before the Mayflower. Obviously, the printed word was viewed by America's first white settlers as the foundation from which all elements grew. Nothing happened or was made significant, unless it was recorded. What they found in the New World was similar, I suspect, to what they discovered on the African Continent: little printed matter in the way they were accustomed to seeing it. So, the inhabitants were thought illiterate, at best. Masks; wooden, bronze, ivory statues, and the like, were not considered as proper ways to communicate; which then qualified the makers of such items to be called "heathens" who had to be "civilized" or "saved" by God through his emissaries the colonizers, with the help of the Word printed in the Bible. What the Europeans didn't know and were little concerned with, was that the oral form of communicating was, and remains, a tradition among the Indians and Africans they "discovered" when they stepped from their boats in search of a "New World" which, in either case, wasn't "New" at all.

But it required an intimate knowledge of the languages, the archaeology, the linguistics of the people who used them in order to know what the paintings meant. What the sculpture was about, what the poems, the plays and the inscriptions said. And these were settlers. They were out to establish a world that allowed more freedom to worship, a place where they would not be punished for raising questions about their religion or the conduct of some of their leaders. They were people anxious for a new social system which would give them some mobility or, at least, the opportunity for it because, as history has it, there was almost no movement within the European system. The class into which you were born was ultimately the class where you died — and they were out to settle a new land; they were out to rule.

Yet these adventurers were not, at first, the elite educated and privileged. For the most part, they were poor, without much training, except for tradesmen and those who had not done well despite opportunities. Their numbers included convicts, whores, the people who

couldn't get along with the British population. They had come from a system of social orderliness that, as I have pointed out, was long established and successful. The education in Europe began at the cradle, ended at the University — for some. And, as we shall see, when the system of schooling began here it wasn't new. One might think that this was a land fresh and therefore so were the people; but the settlers, living in tradition, drew up practically the same system they rebelled against.

The question, then, is not a question, really — it is more, a look at the justifications, and, most importantly, the results.

The European Heritage

Greece was, and remains, the background for European history. Its impression was deep and continuous despite significant changes that arrived in European education by the time American colonization began. These changes reflected themselves briefly in the form of a strong Humanist movement during the Renaissance.

The Renaissance had its focus on the study of Latin and Greek but, fundamentally, its emphasis was Humanism. But that was cut short by the Reformation — a religious revolution.

Humanism headed for a fresh concept of the life of an individual and his relation to society and the state. The movement was not primarily esthetic, literary, or anti-theological, but an ethical and moral one. It attempted to seek out the good life, and point the way to it. And had the Catholics and Protestants been able to exist peacefully long enough to allow humanism a true airing, it might have influenced Europe and ultimately American Education and history more than it did.

"War" was a better word for the Reformation which began around 1519. The Protestants believed children should read and live the Bible for, as Luther's idea states, "There was a priesthood of all believers." The Catholics, who were then and remain today among the largest landowners in the world, thought power and influence over education should be in the hands of the Jesuits. The Protestants won. And with that triumph came the foreshadowing of the puritanism that influences, and, in some instances, controls our lives even today.

A brief description of the European class structure during the reformation (and still reflected in American today,) is in order here. Nobility, and in some cases, Kings, ruled everything, because they owned much of the land and could raise powerful armies to defend it or take more. The church was a strong ally of this ruling class. The Gentry came next. They didn't own as much land as the Nobles, yet they were able to influence their own lives above those of civil servants and lawyers. Merchants followed and eventually moved into positions with the most power and wealth during the nineteenth and twentieth century. This class valued education for their children more than any other in order to maintain their wealth and position. Colleges, and American colleges specifically, are middle class institutions — institutions designed to perpetuate the middle class.

Craftsmen, tenant farmers and servants were on the bottom. They inspired the poor laws which cared for those who couldn't really, or were not allowed to care for themselves. These laws sent children to school where most attended long enough to get the basics before they went out for a job or learned a trade, and the laws also provided some assistance for the invalids and the aged.

The Protestant church came to dominate life; the social system provided the perfect background. Both worked harmoniously — they still do.

Colonial America and Education

Colonial Americans didn't gain a reputation as risk-takers. That education for children was made compulsory by the state because parents weren't handling the job to the satisfaction of the church was of no special significance, since the state and church were one. In fact, it was the church that appealed to the colonial legislature to create the first Compulsory Education Law in 1642.

The Puritan Protestant Ethic dominated American life. Those who followed this Ethic were concerned with raising the little puritans who did great things for America, while at the same time creating in these would-be men and women a tension which at best was painful and, at worst, unbearable. Puritanism required that a man devote his life to seeking salvation but told him he was helpless to do anything but wrong. Puritanism required that he rest his hopes in Christ but taught him that Christ would in the end reject him unless, before he was born, God had preordained his salvation and had announced his holiness to the world. Puritanism required that man reform the world in the image of God's holy kingdom but taught him that the evilness and trickeration of the world was inevitable and there was no chance for a cure. Puritanism required that he receive the good things God had placed in the world, but told him that, while he must enjoy his work and pleasure, they were secondary to the worship and promise of God. This religion, and the extent to which it touched and touches the society, was based on Calvin's idea of a Bible state controlled by God's elect where freedom of thought was totally out. It is a belief in which the depravity of man was a given; a belief which once held, was seldom shaken off; a belief that could shape, and finally warp entire lives.

The Humanities

Music, stories, poems, plays, paintings, sculptures, carvings are but a few elements of art. They are more than pleasant to encounter; they are indispensable if we are to know ourselves as a race, as part of humankind and of the world.

To live in the world of writers, musicians and artists is to be wiser and better situated than experience can make us in our relations with our communities, our governments, our families, our Gods and ourselves, as we encounter all these things day to day. To have humanities at our disposal means we can move beyond the immediate, while at the same time, we can know how uncommonly valuable a place and time can be. Art is life. Art is creation.

Development follows any creative effort until it reaches its naturally endowed maturity, that time when the artist can no longer add another stroke, word or movement and when some mystical magical timer inside or out of the artist, in and out of the object, the creation itself tells him to quit. Then, at that point — is all the perfection either of them can manage.

Art chases down the truth of life without regard to consequences — truth in that sense of accuracy and perspective — it insures distinctiveness. One vision is as allowable as any other.

The Humanities — literature, painting, sculpturing, music, anything humans join with to increase understanding and appreciation of what seems natural and logical — have the privilege and duty to reveal truth immediately, directly and as clearly as possible. The Humanities should promote one's life to a special degree of awareness never reached before.

Most of us lead half lives, blind to most experiences around us. The so-called average man (which is a misnomer; there is no such thing or person) has an individual distinctiveness about him that's more impressive and outstanding than a fingerprint. It's just that it's harder to get at, more difficult to recognize through all the camouflage. He doesn't suspect that every step he takes, every door he opens, legally or not, contributes to what his culture is, how it's lived, how it is described, how it is remembered.

Man makes his environment. But he contributes to it in ways and movements he never thinks of as artistic, creative, or as having a place in the direction of the universe, because man has been influenced to value what is mechanical, and certainly to value anything, no matter what, that will make money. A slight shift of wind three days into Spring gets little or no notice, yet, Detroit produces new car models yearly — they have to — and we are geared to each announcement General Motors, American Motors and Ford makes. But art is us; Art is the lives we live — it is whatever movements, whatever sounds, colors, tone attitudes that comprise everyday. All are elements of what art is and indicate what life could be. So, all we do is art/life.

The Humanities are tools and managers of these elements we experience daily and they help us absorb parcels of these elemental sources that we perhaps have not seen or known were there before. Art is healer. The Humanities direct the medicine where it should go.

Every human soul in the history of the world has art, and art has them. The cultural, environmental expression is different for all the reasons we know histories and cultures are, yet, the one connection inside us all is art. And each has his very own.

Whose Humanities

The sensibilities are marvelous attributes which work best when stimulated properly; however, they will operate regardless of the nature or source of the substances they receive. And for all of us our senses operate superbly when the images, the tones and colors are in line with those of our environment.

American humanistic culture is constructed and reinforced by the history of the Greeks. For some, those conditions are ideal. But those of us whose heritage, habits and attitudes are not inspired by what the Greeks said and did are at somewhat of a disadvantage. Black people, for example, are not in a cultural setting which reflects consistently and positively what our lives are about or have been about and the same is true for the so-called American Indian. The results of this unnatural placement, let us call it, shows most clearly in the educational system which is designed to promote history and, therefore, images in a way which glorifies what is white, Protestant and middle class.

Just because a people lack training in the dominant class's education system does not mean that those persons cannot respond to their own artistic creators. When a black person sees a Charles White original he doesn't necessarily have to understand tone, balance and form in the sense we are told good paintings should have. Instead the uninitiated is likely to respond to the painting based on what's stirred inside, a response which may be difficult to verbalize in language familiar to those who set out what are referred to as standards. Paul Lawrence Dunbar can make us shout with his description of "The Party" or "Philosophy," and, when Gwendolyn Brooks speaks of "Kitchenette Living," "paying rent and satisfying a man," it isn't that white people, Indians, or anyone familiar with English language can't understand and even identify closely with these situations, it's just that in addition to what I've mentioned, we who are black come from the same source as those words. That's a bit of specialness people have in common with their own culture. But, because those humanities which are commonly taught are based on the experience of what is white, Protestant, and middle class, the "bit of specialness" that comes from interacting with an artistic creation that is in line with one's own environment is denied to all those who don't happen to be part of the dominant power group in this country.

Conclusion

America is a repeat of Europe. The social and educational systems are like mother and child; religion dominates, a caste and racist social society exists, which by its nature, eliminates questions such as the type this paper argues in favor of, since we see how the country really is and how it's suffering and how it yields to pressure and the imminent danger which illiteracy represents.

The Humanities are a way out provided they are allowed to co-exist and at the same time to give full expression to differences. Unless that occurs, we are doomed to act out our lives at the pace of some medieval mediocre drama in full quadraphonic sound and vision where the past, because not set straight, will always rise up in the future, blocking the way.

The Adult Learner: Some Suggestions

First, we are talking about thirty million men and women, most of whom are members of a minority race and class structure. The most visible of these adult learners seem to be black and Spanish speaking males. Men in these two categories have achieved less educationally than white, black, and Spanish females and, of course, white males. Some companion facts are interesting. Nearly ninety-five percent (95%) of the people in penal institutions have not completed high school; approximately seventy-nine per cent (79%) of all inmates, male and female, in federal, state and local correctional facilities are black; of that number, more than ninety per cent (90%) are black males between the ages of 18 and 35. (By observation, the ABE population is about the size of the largest minority in this country: black people.)

Further, the adult learner has been characterized as having notions of inferiority, low estimation of his learning abilities and resources, a need for fulfillment beyond the basics (hunger, thirst, sleep, sex), and as being dependent and, last, poor. Well, I suggest all those characteristics are by design. And, just as ABE students and conditions were created, I suggest that they could be eliminated.

The first step, I would think, would be to admit to the learners that certain processes had been established to insure they would become ABE learners and remain that way. Then, after the learners are convinced they they are uneducated because they are powerless, not because they are stupid, they will be ready to participate in learning and in helping to eliminate the processes that were meant to insure their powerlessness.

My next suggestion concerns the location where the learning takes place. The school or learning place or whatever name it's given should be constructed in a way that doesn't overpower the person, but makes the learner want to come, and stay inside. Or the learning center may even be at home; what's important is that people be met in a comfortable and familiar setting. Even the importance of the name of the place of learning should not be overlooked. If it's relative to the learner's life and events, it will mean more than a name that has little meaning or understanding.

I strongly suggest that most of the teachers should be of the same ethnic background as the students, and, if possible, live in the same community. Learning materials (books, films, etc.) should, of course, reflect the cultural environment and attitude the learner can identify with as part of his own.

Finally, the measurement of achievements and awards should coincide with values in the learner's society, which means much research should be put into how the student's life and world is constructed.

CHAPTER V

AFTERWORD

by William C. Jones

The three preceding papers were written by individuals with very diverse styles, ethnic backgrounds, and personal histories; however, all three papers share some important underlying assumptions. First of all, all the authors agree that a person has a right to those tools and skills he or she needs to develop his or her full human potential. Secondly, all agree that one's "human potential" can best be understood through the humanities, and that, as Walter Bradford puts it, "the humanities should promote one's life to a special degree of awareness never reached before." Thirdly, all three insist that **the humanities** should not mean merely what Matthew Arnold has referred to as "The best that has been thought and said," but should be relevant to the cultural, social and ethnic background of the learner. Again to quote Walter Bradford: "Art is the lives we live." Fourth, one of the authors states implicitly, and two explicitly, that the dominant political and social forces in America are not only congruent with America's educational institutions, but have traditionally attempted to limit the meaning of the **humanities** in such a way as to exclude all that might be subversive to the values and interests of white middle class males.

If one takes the above-mentioned areas of agreement seriously, one sees that the three articles are calling for something far more radical than the inclusion of a few "classics" in the Adult Basic Education curriculum. In none of the articles is there even a hint of that patronizing attitude, still all too common in American education, which says to the adult learner: "you are of course too ignorant to understand the really great humanistic achievements of western civilization, but we are going to expose you to one or two of these anyway, so you'll understand the depths of your own ignorance." Instead, the articles are a collective call for adult basic learners to demand that they be given an education which puts them in touch with their own past and helps nurture their pride, rather than their humility. Less obviously, the articles are also a call for adult basic educators to become familiar with and treat with respect the ethnic and class roots of their students.

When these three papers were presented at a "town meeting" in the Spring of 1975, some of the adult basic educators present reacted as if the authors were both criticizing them as teachers and questioning their love for and commitment to the humanities. Such a reaction was unfortunate, for it meant that some of the educators present simply missed the point the authors were trying to make. All three authors have had experience as adult basic educators, and all have great respect for teachers of adult basic education students. What the authors are objecting to are the institutional goals of adult basic education and the narrow way in which adult basic education and the adult basic learner is currently being conceptualized. Bluntly put, as far as the authors are concerned coping skills are necessary for people and plow horses, but people also need sufficient education to become what Carmen Rodriguez refers to as "fully productive individuals." Any educational system which aspires to a lesser goal looks suspiciously like an institutionalized way of insuring that lower class persons will never really pose a threat to those in the classes above them.

A further word needs to be said about the way the three authors use the term **humanities.** All of them had some trouble with the term, and each found it necessary to re-define it. Their problems with the term's definition is a reflection of a broader cultural confusion. **Humanities** has come to have several different meanings and many connotations, ranging from the designation of a small group of academic disciplines which includes philosophy, significant literature, drama, and fine arts; to Walter Bradford's definition of "humanities" as "anything which humans join with to increase understanding and appreciation of what seems natural and logical."

The other two authors have tended to adopt the same "loose" definition as Walter Bradford, and I think they were wise in doing so. Concepts, like institutions, are in periodic need of revitalization; H. Bruce Franklin very ably demonstrates that the time for humanistic education's redefinition and revitalization is long overdue.

Which brings me to my last point. During the "town meeting" where these papers were first presented, Walter Bradford suggested that society was fooling itself when it characterized that vast pool of adult basic learners who crowd our prisons as one of the stupidest subgroups in society. Perhaps, he went on to say, many of those in our prisons are there not because they were not smart enough to make it through the American education system, but because they were too imaginative to tolerate an education which had nothing to do with their pasts, their persons, or their aspirations. Perhaps. But even if Walter Bradford's suggestion is only minimally true it should deeply alarm us. Creative and imaginative individuals are not and never will be satisfied with coping skills. Coping skills may improve one's chances of receiving a weekly paycheck, but they cannot cure frustration and alienation. Only an education that puts a person in touch with his or her humanity can do that. Walter Bradford sums it up: "Art is healer. The Humanities direct the medicine where it should go."

William C. Jones